

## **Summary of Comments from the Flood Corridor Program Public Hearing on Salt River Ecosystem Restoration Project**

A public hearing was held on Thursday, June 28, 2012 at 2:00 pm in Ferndale to receive comments on the Salt River Ecosystem Restoration Project to be funded by the Department of Water Resources (DWR) through the Flood Corridor Program. Approximately thirty people were in attendance including Itzia Rivera and David Martasian representing DWR's Flood Corridor Program. Itzia Rivera gave an overview of the Flood Corridor Program and the purpose of the public hearing. Doreen Hansen, Watershed Coordinator for the Humboldt County Resource Conservation District, gave an overview of the project. The meeting was then opened for questions and formal comments. The comments received from attendees were generally in support of the project. Attendees included representatives from the County Board of Supervisors and the City of Ferndale as well as local residents and property owners. Comments included statements that the project is needed as there are several property owners' whose agricultural production is affected by the flooding, as well as great concern over emergency access on Port Kenyon Road when it is flooded. Concerns included a statement that the project might attract mosquitoes to areas where they have not previously been a problem and an overall interest in how the project would affect flood inundation on individual properties. Residents also wanted assurances that maintenance would occur in the future.

Jimmy Smith – on Board of Supervisors – RCD worked on this in difficult time. Late 90s. Walked Ferndale. Arbor Commission. Fix the Salt River – Catching fish in creeks. Supports the project and work through IRWM, DFG, FWS, Water Board. Cost share matches of huge interest. No way to deal with Williams Creek until this project is done. Reclamation of ag land. Water stays longer now for past 12 years.

Question came from a unnamed property owner, asking of assurances of no flooding on dairy farms. David responded that H&H study and Plan to Minimize Impacts to Adjacent Landowners would have to be prepared in order to find out if project will reduce flooding.

Pat Cowan – Port Kenyon Road. Salt River affects many areas, friends have property that has flooding, there's a great concern for emergency access. Water over Port Kenyon road. Rasmussen and Meridian Road. 2014 seems too far off. But worried about this winter. Buried 6ft post, so much sediment higher than the road. Pat is in support of the project.

Jay Paris – City Manager – City Council is behind his project.

Denver Dawson – Dairy – drive tractors once in a while. Coastal commission. Wildcat mountains are highly erodible. Ferndale bottoms. Showed how the soil ran down into the plain. Is part of the Salt River Watershed Council and is in support of the project.

**start**

24:00

Question:

In regards to should the funds be granted. Where is the flexibility in the use of the funds within the project.

I mean they're specific to that area.

Specific to the port Kenyon crossing

Mmhmm.

If that would be taken care of with other funds, could the port Kenyon crossing be used for other parts of restoration.

David: there is some flexibility right now since we haven't entered into a funding agreement. The purpose of this meeting today is to determine whether or not if we have the blessing of the community to do that next step. There are some restrictions. There can't be more than.. it has to be less than 50% structural component to the project, there has to be ag or wildlife elements as were mentioned earlier. And any changes that we were to make in what was submitted proposal-wise. Depending on how substantial they are or depending on how they would impact how floodwaters would be attenuated, they might need to be reevaluated if they're substantial

So there's a process for reevaluation

Yes, there's a process, but we'd have to go back to the evaluators, if there's a substantial change. But this project scored very well overall.

You spoke of revegetation – what exactly would you be putting back?

Doreen: depending on what is happening in the salt river, if it's going to be more brackish water or freshwater, we have a planting list of what should be going in there. So we will try to make sure it's vegetation that won't overgrow and pick up all that sediment again, we have specific vegetation that will go into certain parts of the salt river. We're trying to be really cognizant of things that will work and won't work and weed out what won't work, and try to put in things that would be native, not so invasive, more manageable and more realistic to keep this project going.

Is that for bank protection or erosion

Doreen: yes, some of it's bank erosion, some of it's for a flood corridor area that will also collect some sediment, some other areas to collect sediment, also for bank erosion, for habitat restoration as well.

How much ag land do you anticipate taking out of production with this project?

Doreen: donna? We're taking some out of production, but we're hoping a lot of the alleviation of the flooding areas were actually mitigating... that those lands will come back into production more often.. than if on a regular winter year, we have flooding 8 months out of the year, some pasture lands aren't available now, once we allieve a lot of that flooding, those pasture lands will come into production a lot faster. To let you know hard numbers, we're taking 300 acres from riverside ranch out of production, but we mitigated that, we found ways that at least 300 acres are coming back into production a lot faster, or won't be as impacted.

Can I give you the history of reas creek.

Why not

My dad bought our place in 1929 and it was at the end of --- lane. .... Unintelligible story

I think the channel will be widened enough...

What do you anticipate to be the depth of the river that's going to be rechanneled.

It's variable. Depending on where you're asking.

So what would be the maximum, outside the riverside ranch project,

The deepest would be like 10 feet.

When you say that after this is all done, the plan is for the community to take over the \_\_\_ of the project.

Well ideally we would like a volunteer group of people to come together. The rcd, afte this is all completed, is basically going to be incharge of maintenance and mgmt of this and what we'd like to do in that 5 years, is to start garnering a consortium of community members that will hopefully come together to look at the adapative mgmt plan, that's to look at what we need to monitorm sowe're going to monitor what's going on in the salt river project. If it hits a trigger point, is it sedimenting up too

much, is there too much vegetation that's grown, we're going to monitor that and then we're going to try to have community members come out and do the maintenance. Gather up everyone up with their tractors or something. We're going to build up this community involvement slowly. And then we hope by the end of 5 years, we'll have something that's funded and organized. Again this is all volunteering, then we'll hand it off to an organization in this community, salt the river watershed council. And they will start taking on that responsibility of keeping it organized and keeping it funded. So it will be a process, but we'll have to get it done. It's too expensive to bring contractors in. and I know that a lot of community members since this is all happening on landowner property, they are interested in maintaining their property with this channel going through it.

Do they plan to do anything to Williams creek

At this time this project will be going just past Williams creek. So we'll alleviate some of that down at the bottom. This project can continue on its own and we could potentially look at augmenting this project and start going up Williams creek where this is significant flooding up in that area. Right now we don't have design plans or permits for that.

Is it all right if we pull trees out of Williams creek?

As long as it's part of our adapt mgmt plan. We'll do monitoring. And we'll come and assess if there's a problem, then yes, if it needs to be done, it'll have to be done. Cuz you know I do pull the trees out of Williams creek. I got... daddy had a permit at the end of the shotgun.

And hopefully we won't need that. we'll do monitoring and have that organized maintenance.

Formal comments on specific conditions:

Jimmy smith: well first my name is jimmy smith and I'm the current supervisor for this district. And rex bohn is incoming supervisor. I'm retiring in a little over a month. He's well aware and he'll be out in the field with me as we go through this project. I really wanted to add because I know matches are really important. We have a great history by the rcd, equally as important, when we started this phase of this project, many years ago, the rcd had a difficult time. there wasn't a lot of money. So when we started this in the late 90s, and I was on the harbor commission, and we walked Ferndale, when I ran for harbor commission, it is same as 1<sup>st</sup> supervisorial district zone, we need to fix this, all sorts of problems, the creek no longer had fish. We had been working with a deepening team with USACE and had strong partnership with them. They came to Ferndale at my request and other team members – mayor at the time and council members, landowners. We sat down and identified project course at the time. ecosystem restoration. That money sort of went away, OR AT LEAST RECORDS ARE SKETCHY. So we worked with them grant funding project identification and timeline. We donated a lot of county and city council time, staff time to make that all happen. Initially to get this thing rolling with a little of funding. That's how it was generated. The reasons was ecosystem restoration. And with the benefits as have

been described. So I heartily support this. its been an honor to work with dwr for a long time now actually through our irwm projects, sb, dfg, usfw, ducks unlimited. The matches are there monetarily to demonstrate a huge interest in.. what you won't ever ever see, are the people who have stood behind it and been out in the middle of thenight, trying to clear paths,

To their homes and get back and forth. What our staff is putting out, maintaining drainage systems and water ways, for wildlife and fish. I did want to answer a question, Williams creek – we had every agency imaginable walk Williams creek and 16 feet that was referred to. Absolutely accurate. We came up with no way to address issues on Williams creek upper watershed from the confluence earlier described until this salt river project is complete. Then the Williams creek restoration could go on. It would be fish friendly. We had calema, rcd, nracs, cal fish and game and other agencies out to look at it. Until we get the master project in place. They said – we need to deal with controlling water around houses. And structures any way you can. Get the bigger project done and we'll come back and look at a restoration plan for Williams creek. We have board members for rcd, incredible, asked to take on. .... rcd board has worked their hearts out. so many times I go to them to apologize because I stood in front of them and tell them that they would be just the agency to handle this. and they have with due diligence. The staff has done a tremendous job. this completion of this project does mean a lot of reclamation of ag land. that's been out of commission for years. And on an annual basis it's gotten worse in the 12 years I've been in office. The water stays longer because sediment collects in areas where traditionally it hasn't. it's spread out and caused moreproblems. More ranch lands and farm lands across landscape. These landowners have so much knowledge, our idea was to mov the water out and get it back in a fish friendly fashion. So that people can enjoy what they had years ago, where we had coho salmon and steelhead trout in this watershed and a place to go, not into a field somewhere when they try to spawn. Or when they go downstreams off into another diversion somewhere. So it's a great plan. The watershed is complex it needs a lot of help and what you are doing here today, just being here with us, listening to these folks who have a great deal of history. And really care about the land, integrity of eel valley, and the lifestyles they enjoy. Productivity of agriculture, and wildlife resources. I just fully applaud you for being here. and support the plan as noted. We will work with you in any way we can.

What kind of assurances do we have that the areas on \_\_\_ road will get flooded every, every winter. Now I feel sorry for jean zarkinski, he gets flooded until july almost. What kind of assurances do we have.

Um, I don't know that through our funding in the project, that we actually have – we haven't finished the h&H analysis, so we don't really know at this date and time, what the actual hydraulic impacts will be or what the frequency of inundation will be reduced to with the implementation of this project. We do anticipate that if we move forward with the funding of this project, that would be one of the very first things that we would do. We would have an h&h study prepared and we would look at that. there would be a plan to minimize impacts to adjacent landowners document prepared, that would be available for folks to view and foment on. I don't know the specific details of the parcel you're speaking of, without having that h&h study and specific details. The specific details of the project, I understand the broad perspective, what we've been evaluating for the last year and a half. Whether it meets the grant guidelines criteria. If there are specific parcels and locations that you're concerns that implementation of this project would negatively impact parcels then that's certainly something that you should document in writing and send to us by email or fax and we have blank comment forms up here

that we can either receive today or if you'd like to mail them to us. I believe our comment period extends another two weeks past this date. So if there are specific concerns that there will be negative impacts as a result of funding this project we would certainly like to know that.

Well my husband's father put in a drainage system many many years ago and it doesn't drain anymore because salt river is so that it can't drain out. so it has to go into the soil or evaporate. One or the other. And for 6 months in some places, where you can't use your land.

David: Well my understanding of the broader intent of this project is to alleviate or reduce that along property owners boundaries. Again, if you have concerns that it will actually negatively impact that, then I would certainly say you should provide us comments and we can take a look at that once we have additional hydrologic and hydraulic data.

Any other comments

I'm Pat Cowan and I'm not a property owner per se, adjacent, but I live on port Kenyon road. And the salt river, which now flows on port Kenyon road, it affects many different areas, not only do many of my friends have property that's affected from an ag perspective, but the flooding that occurs on port Kenyon road. I have great concern particularly for an emergency access. There are times when the water flows across port Kenyon road and Masterson road, and Meridian road, which prevents emergency access vehicles from reaching us. that includes fire, sheriff dept, as well as ambulance. That has always been a concern of mine. That should there be someone that has a medical need or a fire, and now, I showed you the picture of what happens with ¾ inch of rain, I'm a little dismayed that it will be 2014, I'm very concerned about this winter, about what's going to happen. I'm very much in support of this project being moved forward. That's all I wanted to say. Agriculturally there's been a huge impact. As a side story, as a teenager I used to fish in the salt river, catch fish and duck hunt down there. I remember when we used to clean that out in October, all of us would get together and clean it out. I think the 64 flood had a major impact on that. we all had to take care of our own property. Instead of doing that, the silt that was there. I can tell you that across the road from me where the salt flows, or used to flow, we used to have visible fence posts 6 feet high above the ground, now they are completely buried. You would have to dig several feet to even find the top of the old posts. The old river bed is higher than the road. It doesn't work. and that's the second phase of this project.

So there's some real urgency.

I want to temper my response to these things. Generally for these public hearings, we generally don't, we try not to respond to comments, we like to take it back to management, but just so that you're aware, the funds we have available for this project, if we move forward with a funding agreement, are available. We hope to have a funding agreement in place no later than December of this year. Those are our intentions. As far as the rate at which the project moves forward, as was discussed earlier, there's some need for funding partners and finalizing some of the design plans for phase 2. Those things take time. The money is not the issue. At least from the amount of money that the department of water resources has, we are not dictating the timeline for when this is supposed to happen. What we really need to hear today from folks is if they are in support of the project, if they have opposition to the project, if there are conditions or reasons why the project shouldn't be funded, or there are conditions that should be included in the funding agreement. As you heard the basic desc today. the basic overview, that's the intent of what we plan to enter into funding agreement-wise. With community support. But if there are concerns or certain conditions that need to be included. That's ultimately what we need to take back to our management. With that said, are there additional comments? And I want to also qualify that, if anyone wants to go home and ponder things and think about what was presented today, there's still a couple of weeks to get something in by mail or by email. It is available, I'm sure others are available here to provide clarifying information, or to which additional comments can be delivered.

Question: you say you have to wait until December to find out about funding?

No sir. We have a timeline of end of December by which time we wish to have a full funding agreement executed and ready to move forward. Prior to that would be great. The End of December is when we wish to at the latest have it in place. That is our goal. To have a fully executed funding agreement signed by the state and the local community to move forward on this project.

What if Brown don't get his payraise in November?

This money is funded out of the 2006 proposition 84 allotment, I believe, and that money has already been committed to this program. The politics.. there have been times when there have been bond freezes, in the past, that have influenced things. The money is there. The voters decided in 2006 that they wanted funds available for this type of program. The money is there right now.

Question: will the money be continued after the restoration is done?

There is a fixed cost agreement. It will not exceed the \$300,000 that was requested. With rare exception does it ever exceed that amount. It is not funding in perpetuity. It's funding to implement a project. The expectation of our grant agreement that the entities that are undergoing the project will maintain it in perpetuity.

Do you anticipate or has any one said anything about lot parcel taxes or anything like that will be passed in order to maintain it?

David must have shook his head no.

Jay parrish, city manager, I just wanted to reiterate that city council is wholeheartedly behind this, supports it, implores and requests that you help fund this very vital project.

Have you put any bids out for contractors yet?

Let me clarify that as well. The project is or will be undertaken by the rcd. We are providing funding, if we move forward with the funding agreement, as a grant. It is essentially free money with certain conditions.

FREE MONEY!!!

Free money..

Boy, I need to get in on this!

It's free money, it's tax payer money, that the voters of the entire state said that they wanted to put towards flood control, agricultural preservation, and ecosystem enhancement, and nonstructural elements of flood control. With that said, the rcd, with this application, went through a competitive solicitation process. And of the 36 proposals we've received, they were one of 13 that have received both our technical reviewer' and management team's recommendations for funding. The money has to be spent in a way that meets the conditions of the agreement and the condition of the bond act passed by the voters. That said, this project is not dwr's project, this project is one for the salt river and is being directed by the rcd. We have no say in the bid process and contractor selection. We do have requirements that competitive bid process take place and such. But we do not dictate who the selection actually is.

But you haven't put out any bids for contractors?

We do not play a role in the actual bid process.

Who puts the bids out for contractors?

The grantee, the rcd, would be putting the bids out, is my understanding. And then it will go through a bid selection process. At the time the work is completed, we reimburse in arrears for the work as it is completed.

Any additional comments?

I have a comment. When the project gets done, how far back at high tide will salt water come into the salt river?

I think that's another question that will probably be best addressed when the H&H study is done. I don't know if you have any additional knowledge as to how far that tidal influence would be.

Doreen: the tidal influence as we have designed the channel planned right now will be up to around Dillon bridge.

Are you scared to go any further because I'm up there.

**Unintelligible conversation.**

What effects will it (tidal influence) have on properties below Dillon bridge? The properties will then be contaminated with salt water.

As far as I understand it, the salt water inundation coming up that far, it will continue to keep large vegetation from forming – like willows from growing in the channel .

The other question I've asked before, what about the mosquito habitat? When this is done, the mosquitos like they do out there at ocean ranch, there's mosquitoes galore, is there any kind of control for that?

Doreen: yeah, I can't answer that question.

Jimmy smith: let me answer it. right now there are 100s of acres of water right now with mosquito habitat. So the brackish water mosquitoes are aggressive ones. I think it's meant to contain the salt water within the levee system except for the riverside ranch area where the salt water slows. That's my understanding. This is going through hydrology/design for how many years, donna? How many consultants have we paid to figure this out? So there is actually a design on how far up the salt water would reach and how far back it would go based on the tidal prism, and the amount of water that would be captured in the new estuary. it's a replication of what it used, It's not new, it's what it used to be that's being restored.

Unintelligible comment.

Ok, so what's ocean ranch solution for mosquitoes? Well, it's a problem. Because anybody that lives out on that road – every night they can't go outside because there are thousands of mosquitoes. And they spread disease. If you're out there and live on that road you have to put up with that. And you never did before.

I was born and raised up on the Lower Salt River. And the tidewater would come up clear past our place.

Our property was at the headwaters of Williams creek, we got mosquitoes up there.

Unintelligible.

Well a person might laugh today. But when everything's all put in motion, everything's done with, they won't do nothing about it. I don't know if they have a solution for Lochtin road. And the people who live out there and have mosquitoes. They can't even go out in their backyard at night. That's how bad it is. We have all these studies but maybe they missed something. I'm going to be smart.

My name is Ben Bronouso. I own 200 something acres dairy on part of the Salt River. Fortunately I'm a cattle dairyman. My son and daughter do all the work. I hear these discussions and they get very complex. I brought my piece of paper along. I first used this at the coastal omission. There were thousand dollar an hour guys in black suits came up right after that said that's the best explanation I've ever heard of this. and it's free. I'll give it to you. If you look out the window that's the wildcat formation right there, them mountains. That's probably the most, highly erodible range in the world. Or close to it. If you look out that way, that's Ferndale bottoms. So what has happened is these are the mountains, this is the plain down here.

Interruption by member of public.

Alright so. You see this. You know this. You've lived here for 100 years. Over the last 100 years the soil up there has run down into the plain down here. It used to be before that happened, that it all flowed down here, the ocean was over here. so the salt river, eel river up there all flowed into the ocean. What happened is that the center part of the salt river filled up with sediment. So now that the lower half of the salt river flows down into the ocean. The upper half flows through my dairy backwards. And on its way it floods all these peoples lands. The project is really simple. I hate to bring this up about the city of Ferndale. But they put their sewage into the salt river here. and they have a special dispensation to put in sewage without as much flow as most places do. So in order to make the project work all you have to do is dredge out the middle of the salt river. It all flows this way again, you can eliminate the flooding, it doesn't flow backward. The land that's being taken out of production is much less than the land that you'll get into production because of flooding. I remember the watershed council, we started out with 5 people and now we have 9. The idea is that if you can get 40 people that live in the Ferndale bottoms to

agree on anything, it's a miracle, and we have. Everybody agrees with what I just said. That's the beauty of this project. When it first started, there was a bunch of bureaucrats running around talking the language that nobody really understood. It's really a simple project. There isn't anybody that isn't going to sign onto this because it's a good project. For the future maintenance of it, the watershed council is about, is to get people interested in it. Most people who have land along the salt river will dig it out anyway when sediment comes down. Most now are afraid to dig it out because there are 43 bureaucrats running at them saying you can't do this and you can't do that. We have the permits now to maintain it. And so I don't think that's a big problem for continued maintenance. This is a wonderful project because it encompasses a lot of private landowners and does service to lots of things that I haven't even mentioned fish. Because I don't think you're interested in fish. We're supposed to always say fish because this is a restoration project. And it really is. You can hear the people who used to fish in the salt river. There's no fish in my part of the salt river. I think you'd be hard pressed to find anybody in this area that is not in favor of this project. They may not like the government bureaucrats running around, but even bureaucrats are doing good things to make this happen. Thanks.